

American citizen. These glossy flash cards are read, and they will have on them questions like, Who's the Father of our Country? Snap it over and it's George Washington. Who emancipated the slaves? Republican Abraham Lincoln. Actually, it just says Abraham Lincoln on the other side, Mr. Speaker. What's the economic system of the United States of America? Flip that flash card over and it says free enterprise capitalism.

This is not a secret. We want people to be empowered by freedom, by God-given liberty, not dependent upon some political party that's going to hand out the largesse of government at the expense of other people and actually at the expense of borrowing money from foreign countries to drive us into debt of now nearly \$16.8 trillion in national debt.

So the cynical effort to expand the political base erodes the rule of law, erodes free enterprise, puts America in debt. So now that the babies that were born today in the United States of America owe Uncle Sam more than \$53,000 each. That's what we have and that's what we're dealing with. And we have a country that we need to pull back from the brink of bankruptcy. We're moving in that direction under I think good, strategic leadership here in the House. We have a budget that we've approved that balances. And it's too long for me. I don't want to wait that long—10 years. But meanwhile, the President's budget balances exactly never and drives us deeper and deeper into debt and raises taxes, Mr. Speaker.

So how do we bring out the greatness of America? The greatness of America was described by Ronald Reagan when he talked about the shining city on the hill. But Ronald Reagan never spoke about the shining city on the hill as being our destiny. He spoke about it as the America that we were and presumably the America that we are. I will argue that our job is to refurbish the pillars of American exceptionalism, to strengthen us in all of those pillars. We know what they are. They're very clear. Many of them are in the Bill of Rights. Freedom of speech is a pillar of American exceptionalism. I'm exercising it at this moment, Mr. Speaker. Freedom of speech, religion, the press and assembly; the right to keep and bear arms; the right to face your accuser in a court of law and be tried by a jury of your peers; single, not double jeopardy; the right to property; the right to see that the enumerated powers that are exclusively to the United States Congress, those other powers devolve to the States or the people respectively. Those are some of the pillars. I mentioned free enterprise capitalism as another pillar of American exceptionalism. But wrapped up within this, within this Constitution that I carry in my jacket pocket, is the supreme law of the land, our Constitution, and we would not be America if we didn't have all of these pillars that

I have described and also have the rule of law.

Now why would thinking people that were elected to come to this United States Congress and make good value judgments and good policy judgments, why would they be so willing and some of them eager to sacrifice the rule of law in an effort to cynically reach out and ask for a vote? Why would someone vote for someone who's willing to sacrifice the rule of law? It defies my logic application, Mr. Speaker. And amnesty is a sacrifice of the rule of law. And once you give it, once you grant it, it's almost impossible to restore it.

I remember when Ronald Reagan signed the Amnesty Act of 1986. And I was not in politics at the time. I was operating my construction company that was 11 years old at the time, raising three young sons, struggling through the farm crisis decade of the eighties. But I'm watching the news, and I'm seeing this debate take place that we have 800,000 to a million that are in the United States illegally. Generally, most of them at that time came across the southern border and stayed. And there was such a big problem that we needed to address it—800,000 to a million that were here illegally then.

So Ronald Reagan, I think under great persuasive pressure from some of the Cabinet members around him, conceded that he would sign that 1986 Amnesty Act. And when he did that, my frustration level went over the top. I believed that in spite of all the pressure that was brought on Ronald Reagan as President, he would see clearly that you can't sacrifice the rule of law in order to solve a problem that came about because of not enforcing the law, and that the promise of enforcement in the future was not going to be upheld adequately to compensate for the amnesty that they were granting in that bill.

Now the promise was this: every employer was going to have to fill out for each applicant an I-9 form. That I-9 form had—I gave it shorthand and called it name, rank, and serial number, but other data, too, of the job applicant. I remember my fear that the INS, the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the time, would come into my office and go through my files and audit me and make sure that I had every I-9 form exactly filed right, and I want to make sure I didn't miss it with anyone.

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We religiously followed the new 1986 Amnesty Act requirements that there would be I-9 forms. We expected that there would be enforcement and penalties for employers that violated that because the premise was the Federal Government, enforced by the Justice Department at the time, would be there to audit employers and enforce the rule of law. That was the full-blown premise that came with Ronald Reagan's signature on the Amnesty Act of 1986.

I don't have any doubt that Ronald Reagan intended to follow through on the enforcement of the Amnesty Act. I can tell you that I followed my part. I've still got some of those records in my dusty files back there somewhere. Many other employers were concerned that they would not be able to follow the letter of the law. It didn't work out that way. They didn't show up in office after office, company after company. And after 20 years of the Amnesty Act that was 800,000 to 1 million. Because of document fraud and just a misestimation of the numbers, that 800,000 to 1 million became 3 million people that were granted amnesty in that act that was signed by Ronald Reagan in 1986.

Now, what did we learn from that, Mr. Speaker? And those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it. Well, I have this document that's written by Attorney General Ed Meese, who was Ronald Reagan's Attorney General at that period of time and charged with enforcing the immigration law that was passed in Amnesty in '86. This is an op-ed that he wrote, published in Human Events on December 13, 2006. Among his dialogue here is this—and I'll read some of it into the RECORD, Mr. Speaker. I think it's worth our attention. It's Attorney General Ed Meese writing of Ronald Reagan's Amnesty Act.

From the article, he says:

Illegal immigrants who could establish that they had resided in America continuously for 5 years would be granted temporary resident status, which could be upgraded to permanent residency after 18 months and, after another 5 years, to citizenship. It wasn't automatic. They had to pay application fees. They had to learn to speak English. They had to understand American civics, pass a medical exam and register for military selective service. Those with convictions for a felony or three misdemeanors were ineligible.

Mr. Speaker, this language is almost verbatim the language that was plugged into the 2006 Amnesty Act and into what is likely to come out of the Senate.

I would be happy to yield for an announcement.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 716. An act to modify the requirements under the STOCK Act regarding online access to certain financial disclosure statements and related forms.

COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM—CONTINUED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman may proceed.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I had to pause for a minute there. I was concerned that might be the Amnesty Act coming over from the United